



**U.S. Department of Justice**  
**Drug Enforcement Administration**

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*Office of the Administrator*

*Springfield, Va 22152*

July 22, 2011

The Honorable Darrell E. Issa  
Chairman  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
U. S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman and Senator Grassley:

This responds to your letter of, July 15, 2011, regarding the Committee's investigation of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) operation called Operation FAST AND FURIOUS. Your inquiry seeks a direct response from the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), a briefing of your staff, and any related documents and electronic messages meeting established criteria.

DEA is reviewing its role in the OCDETF investigation, and our efforts to identify responsive documents are ongoing. We look forward to providing you with a briefing on DEA's role and deconfliction processes, but we would like to defer the briefing until our document survey and assessment are concluded. In the meantime, we hope that the summary below—based on the preliminary information available to us—will be helpful.

DEA works cooperatively with its federal, state and local partners in support of drug-related aspects of their investigations, in many cases simply sharing investigative expertise and leads or responding to ad hoc manpower requests for an investigative or enforcement operation by the lead agency. Relative to ATF Operation FAST AND FURIOUS, the targeted criminal organization is under investigation through the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF), whereby the resources and expertise of its member agencies, which include DEA and ATF, are brought to bear for the purpose of disrupting and dismantling the most serious drug trafficking and money laundering organizations and those primarily responsible for the nation's drug supply. Task forces dedicated to this prosecutor-led model of enforcement are known as Strike Forces.

DEA's preliminary review to identify any investigative activity associated with ATF Operation FAST AND FURIOUS revealed that the DEA El Paso Division and Phoenix Division have been indirectly involved in the ATF operation through DEA-associated investigative activity. The DEA El Paso Division responded to a duty call in March 2010 from ATF for assistance in conducting an ongoing surveillance operation in the El Paso area as part of Operation FAST AND FURIOUS.

The DEA Phoenix Division had the most notable associated investigative activity, though DEA personnel had no decision-making role in any ATF operations. During the course of a DEA Phoenix Division investigation conducted in late 2009, which was unrelated to ATF's Operation FAST AND FURIOUS, DEA intercepted conversations pursuant to court authorized electronic surveillance indicating that a subject was involved in the trafficking of weapons and small quantities of drugs. DEA performed a background check and case deconfliction on the subject and telephone number through established mechanisms. During this deconfliction, DEA discovered that the Phoenix ATF Strike Force Group had initiated an investigation in October 2009 on the subject intercepted in the DEA case. Since the subject who was intercepted was not the target of the current DEA investigation and was involved in relatively small scale drug trafficking activities, the DEA group passed the information and an audio copy of the intercepted call to the Phoenix ATF Strike Force Group. On February 19, 2010, the DEA opened a case file and assigned a DEA Special Agent to assist the ATF Strike Force in drug-related aspects of the subject's affiliated weapons and drug trafficking organization.

While we are continuing to develop information responsive to your requests, as noted above, the information currently available to us indicates that the DEA Phoenix Division support during the investigative phase of Operation FAST AND FURIOUS included the following:

- Telephone and address deconfliction through established deconfliction mechanisms.
- Issuance of administrative subpoenas for telephone subscriber information related to telephone numbers identified during the investigation.
- Funding linguist costs in the amount of \$128,000 in support of the court authorized electronic intercepts that were conducted by the ATF.
- Assistance in the "round up" phase of the case with the execution of search warrants.
- Assistance in processing four drug exhibits and submission of the same to the DEA laboratory system for evidence processing.
- Participation in defendant debriefings.
- Upon invitation from ATF, participation in the press conference held in Phoenix on January 25, 2011, along with ATF, IRS and the U.S. Attorney's Office, although DEA did not have a speaking role.

DEA does not generally designate particular personnel in the field to serve as liaisons with other federal law enforcement agencies, in part, because DEA agents often work closely with other law enforcement personnel on a routine basis. The Special Agents in Charge (SACs) have responsibility for addressing any unresolved liaison issues and a list of the current SACs in Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas is set forth below.

Phoenix, Arizona Field Division – Acting SAC Douglas Coleman  
El Paso, Texas Field Division (Note: New Mexico is within the El Paso Field  
Division's area of responsibility) – SAC Joseph Arabit  
Dallas, Texas Field Division – SAC James Capra  
Houston, Texas Field Division – Acting SAC Thomas Hinojosa

We hope this information is helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact this office if we may provide additional assistance regarding this, or any other matter.

Sincerely,

  
Michele M. Leonhart  
Administrator

cc: The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy  
Chairman  
Committee on the Judiciary  
United States Senate